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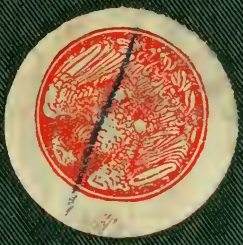

THE MIGHT OF MANHATTAN

And Other Poems

JOSEPH D. McMANUS

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THE MIGHT OF MANHATTAN

And Other Poems

The Might of Manhattan

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By JOSEPH D. McMANUS

CHARLES FRANCIS PRESS
Printing Crafts Building
New York

PS 3525
.A273M5
1919

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DEC 20 1919

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THE MIGHT OF MANHATTAN

I

HOW MIGHTY is the forest oak whose span
Broad centuries of steady growth uprear!
But mightier are the towering works of man
Wrought in the narrow compass of a year,
And mightiest on Manhattan they appear
To grace this wonder isle,—this throbbing mart,—
Which drains the pulses of a hemisphere
To claim the best that Wealth and Skill impart
And lift a lofty skyline, radiant with Art.

II

A diadem by day, a great glow-worm
At night, encanopies the hives of trade,
Where Mammon's lure, deep, sentiment and firm,
Holds myriad minions fretful and afraid
Lest they be gripped so tightly, all plans laid
For winning or for gaining fall to ground;
Yet, over all, the spirit that has made
Manhattan's grit and greatness world-renowned
Shines in that superb skyline where success is crowned.

III

Huge panoramic signboard where, behold!
Proud Progress paints her own advertisement;
Can Commerce cast herself in statelier mold
Or Business build a worthier monument?
The practical and artistic here are blent
In harmony: Colossal towers and domes
Are silhouetted in the firmament
With splendours that were once Imperial Rome's
Chief boast, in public pomp and luxury of homes.

IV

Mount, mimic miniature Alps! in serried files
  Of many-storied structures reared in pride,
Within a radius of a dozen miles
  Here half-a-dozen million souls reside,—
  A medley of all nations unified
In mutual uplift to participate:
  Consider what this ever-rising tide
Of compact human energy will create
For generations, yet unborn, to contemplate.

V

Charmed crucible! wherein constructive force
  Enfetters those twin-tyrants, Time and Space,
With marvels of invention and resource
  That comfort and convenience find a place:
  Unrivalled is Manhattan in the race
For world supremacy; can fate withstand
  Intensive Industry's prodigious pace
Which Destiny and Duty both demand, —
The hope of humankind when armaments disband.

VI

But if earth's potentates in league with Mars
Ordain that all millennium efforts cease,
That Science seek her laurel wreaths in wars,
That arms are indispensable to peace,
Then let the nation's armaments increase
And multiply the arsenals and forts
To be prepared for challenge or caprice
Of foreign foes that plan with trained cohorts
To levy tribute on the richest of seaports.

VII

The ideal state is where the people's voice
Is heard and heeded for the common weal,
Not where conscripted troops, the despot's choice,
Implant subservience with an iron heel,
From whose oppression there is no appeal;
To rule by right divine is feudal creed
Founded on myth, by monarchs urged with zeal
To thwart the hopes for equal rights that feed
On fruits of Liberty and Learning's mingled seed.

VIII

More threatening than the absolute control
A czar once wielded is the power that craves
Allegiance to a fancied super-soul,—
Benevolent autocracy,—that paves
A pensioned pathway for contented slaves
Whose sacrifice of individual rights
To guardians, from their cradles to their graves,
Indulges worldly wants and appetites,
But dulls the flame of life which Freedom's torch ignites.

IX

Nowhere evince the tillers of the soil
More taste or fitness for enlightenment,
Nowhere are clasped the grimy hands of toil
For labor's liberation more intent
Or purposeful than on this continent,
Where in its culminating strength and scope
Manhattan offers proof most eloquent
That men and principles may safely cope
With problems each evolve,—Democracy's proud hope.

X

But looking backward in reflective mood
Across the centuries that intervene
Since Peter Minuit, the trader, stood
With Indians near the site of Bowling Green
Negotiating with complacent mien
A four-and-twenty dollar rum outlay
For title to Manhattan's sylvan scene;
How changed the times and customs since that day
Or since the stern and sturdy Stuyvesant held sway!

XI

To understand Manhattan and to catch
The deeper meaning of the force that nerved
Successive generations to outmatch
Foregoing efforts,—as with wings uncurved
For poise or perchment, Progress soars unswerved
To altitudes of grandeur unconfined,
From various vantage-points should be observed
The crowning civic conquests of mankind
That flash their natural pulsing films upon the mind.

XII

Viewed from the harbor on a summer's day
By travelers aboard incoming ships,
The scene evokes emotions into play,
Starts admiration leaping to the lips
And pleasure tingling to the finger-tips;
Oh! how the native bosom swells with pride,
No seaport spectacle can this eclipse,
Nerve-center of a nation at flood-tide
With Liberty's enlightening torch aloft to guide.

XIII

Seen from the summit of the tallest tower,
Almost a thousand feet above the street,
The great metropolis reveals its power
In magnitude and majesty complete,
And distant objects seem beneath the feet;
Vision extends for forty miles around,
Scan the horizon's circle, what a treat?
Look inland classic Princeton is found,
Eastward, thro' ocean mists speed steamers homeward bound.

XIV

Off Sandy Hook the Atlantic's crest of blue
Dim-outlined dwindles to a shore-line gray,
Dwarfed in the focus of a bird's eye view,
The Narrows, Ambrose Channel and the bay,
Unfold a mighty maritime array,
Where flags of every nation flout the gale,
Big bristling battleships at anchor lay,
While fleets of ferryboats jammed to the rail
Flit to and fro 'mid countless craft that steam or sail.

XV

There stands upon the harbor-front seawall
An ancient fort that bears the Aquarium's name,
Perhaps the most historic spot of all
The noted many that this isle can claim,
As Castle Garden it acquired its fame,
For dating back to eighteen-fifty-five
Eight million aliens through its portals came
To labor, learn to assimilate and strive
To help this great Republic prosper and survive.

XVI

These migrant millions lured from various climes
And meeting, mingling, intermarrying here,
Left deep and forceful impress on the times
Since then till now, and many a future year
Their progeny as leaders will appear
To lift Advancement's banner for this realm,
Equipped to serve in any rank or sphere;
No tempest shall the ship of state o'erwhelm
When pilots, sons of pioneers, are at the helm.

XVII

Old former Castle Garden! landmark set
With memories that a century invest;
Here on his farewell visit Lafayette
Was welcomed as the nation's honored guest;
Here landed Edward, Prince of Wales, in quest
Of youth's diversions; here Inventor Morse
Scored triumph in his telegraphic test;
Here Barnum's fame as showman had its source,
And hither Kossuth steered from Hungary his course.

XVIII

Thronging the island's center, north and south,
Throughout Manhattan's length of thirteen miles,
From Battery Park which flanks the Hudson's mouth
To where the broad Van Courtlandt meadow smiles,
Runs Broadway, famed for spenders, shows and styles,
Magnetic and mirage-like, masking care,
While underneath the glamour, froth and wiles,
Flow channelled depths that human currents wear
Which vitalize the world's most vaunted thoroughfare.

XIX

The modern network of Industrialism
Evolves a mode of living keen and tense,
Keyed by a highly-complex mechanism
That interlocks for Capital's defence,
Curtailing incomes, adding to expense
Of toiling masses who for living wage
Serve sinews to famed fortunes so immense,
Their philanthropic owners must engage
Endowment experts to divert them in old age.

XX

There's something nobler, infinitely higher,
In passing through the solemn vale of life
Than mere unchecked ambition to acquire
Pelf with its paltry pastime, sordid strife;
Where greed for gold is rampant, graft is rife;
Better an honest heart, a cultured taste,
A love of home, of offspring and of wife,
With income that inhibits want or waste
Than all the wiles on which plutocracy is based.

XXI

The people's peerless playground, Central Park,
Whose charms appeal to every age and class,
Has not escaped the grim despoiler's mark;
The Arsenal is closed, and gone, alas!
The sportsman's tavern at McGowan's Pass,
The Belvedere obtrudes its ruined heap,
The old stone fort is overgrown with grass;
But fading landmarks frowning in dull sleep
O'er livelier landscape scenes forwarning vigils keep.

XXII

From teeming Eastside tenements that group
Their human herds like cattle in a stall,
On holidays pic-nicking parents troop
With romping children to the water-fall
Or harken to the music on the Mall,
Eluding for the nonce their chief concern,—
The economic fetters that enthrall,—
To draw direct from nature's healthful urn
The balm of rural life for which their spirits yearn.

XXIII

Midway in Central Park where echoes sound
Faint murmurs of the turmoil life demands
For sustenance, erected on a mound
With cryptic message carved by ancient hands,
An obelisk that rose above the sands
Of Egypt ere the Christian era's start
Was chronicled, in lordliness now stands
Like some mysterious sentinel apart
Behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

XXIV

Stern symbol of endurance! Mystics preach
In vain thy sermon but cannot obscure
Thy purpose, for thy presence serves to teach
That Art, like Time, is destined to endure:
Ere Culture's dawn thou wert Art's overture
And all the aesthetic harmonies combined
That stately sumptuous sanctuaries insure
With treasured trophies of each master-mind
Are Civilization's grandest gifts to all mankind.

XXV

What is the secret of the power that gives
A faculty to fame that fascinates
In cherished classic which through ages lives?
'Tis toil that tills the talent that creates
While sloth in vain on inspiration waits,
And Genius, so distinctive and oft fraught
With tastes aesthetic and eccentric traits,—
So loathed by mediocrity,—is naught
But mental vision's range expanded by trained thought.

XXVI

The ancient Greeks who gave to law a status
And lauded justice in their classic odes
Revered a fabled hero, Fortunatus,
Whose smiles were more engaging than the codes
That Solon taught in forum-famed abodes:
But in Manhattan luck's an unchased bubble,
And law seems distant as the antipodes
From honor, while the art of dealing-double
Is substituted for success in masking trouble.

XXVII

There are some natures crude, conceited, coarse,
With instincts of the wolf and fox endowed,
That elbow and hobnail their way by force
To places in the forefront of the crowd,
Preempting posts beyond their fitness, proud
To meet all public protests with a sneer
Or hold the mob in mood resentful cowed;
Thus roved and ruled the old-time buccaneer
Whose modern chrysalis yields a gouging profiteer.

XXVIII

Symptoms of blight,—the problem paramount,—
Defenders of Democracy must face,
Lurk in the heedless tendency to count
Position, power, preferment, public place,
Attained by standards false and methods base,
As laudable: Why is this noxious scourge,
Which goads the conscience of the human race,
Licensed to flout all moral codes and urge
What Justice, blinded, gropes in vain to probe and purge?

XXIX

Unless the civic conscience be aroused
To worthier impulse than material gain,
The cause our patriot forefathers espoused
For freedom and equality will wane;
As long as special privilege is the bane
Of social justice, laws will lure mischance,
While honest worth with intrigue vies in vain;
Not Force, but Faith in ideals, must advance
To breast the bulwarks reared by brigands of finance.

XXX

Motoring in modish juggernaut array,
The gilded god of chance through Wall street drives
To haunts where hordes of human birds of prey
Revel in riches reaped on ruined lives;
In money's maddening maelstrom Conscience strives
To merge what moral precepts have instilled,
But Verity, not Vanity, survives,
And soon would earth with famine's phantoms filled
To primal types revert unless the soil be tilled.

XXXI

For in the elemental warp that yields
Forces that forge the militant right arm
And moral fibre Civilization wields
To compass life with cheerfulness and charm,
The font and firm foundation is the farm;
Ancient and stable as the human race
Is Agriculture, and though myriads swarm
Manhattan's marts in Mammon's ceaseless chase
Their providence is meted by the ploughman's pace.

XXXII

Out of stupendous strife there often dawns
This sober thought which chastened mood presents:
Mortals, however masterful, are pawns
Upon the changing chessboard of events;
The courtly sculptor, Vanity, cements
Heroic names upon the scroll of Time,
But Fame is seldom cradled by intents,
And often those discouraged in their prime
Have soared through opportune events to heights sublime.

XXXIII

Goddess that guards the temple reared to sports
With bow and arrow ready for the chase,
Dashing Diana, naked-limbed, cavorts
Atop a tower of architectural grace;
Old Madison Square Garden is the place
To witness games, Olympic-like, that still
Attract all classes of the populace
Who mingle and acclaim with shouts that thrill
Triumphant victors in the feats of strength and skill.

XXXIV

Where styles of modern architecture share
With quaint colonial types the passing view
Keen is the human instinct to compare
Details of difference in the old and new;
The Jumel Mansion, foremost of the few
Preserved ancestrial homesteads, still abounds
In interest as the patriots' rendezvous,
While 'neath its rocky perch tumultuous sounds
Oft echo from the stadium of the Polo Grounds.

XXXV

Within the shadow cast by Coogan's bluff
The captivating contest of baseball
Elicits roars in volume vast enough
The muttering of Niagara to recall
On rainless afternoons from Spring till Fall,
When hosts hilarious gather to exhort
The keenest, cleanest pastime of them all,
As rival teams to strategy resort
In matching speed and skill,—the Spartan test of sport.

XXXVI

Presumptuous youth would fain adventure far
Through ultra-urban life without a hitch,
But like the unskilled pilot of a car,
The simple thoughtless turning of a switch
May shift him from the highway to the ditch;
Conceit has cankered many a proud career
That might have earned admission to a niche
In halls of fame, if temperament's high-gear
Had been inured from early youth to wisdom's steer.

XXXVII

Turf, set apart by nature's grace to yield
Relief or respite from dull routine cares,
May once have been a public Potter's Field,
Like Bryant Park whose origin compares
With those of Madison or Union squares;
Each in its turn received the pauper dead,
Each groomed its lawns, its shade-trees and parterres
O'er humblest graves as progress northward spread,
And now they harbor human helplessness instead.

XXXVIII

Ye who, misled by demagogue's design
  Or fired by proletarian's frenzied plea,
Have faith in cults that seek to undermine
  The spirit that upholds democracy;
  Ye who regard republics as the free
Exploiting grounds for foreigners to plant
  Seditious seed; ye who claim liberty
Neglects her heroes cast in adamant,
  That noble deeds inspire, approach the Tomb
    of Grant.

XXXIX

High o'er the Hudson where the steep incline
  Of parked embankment fronts a terraced drive,
Stroll leisurely like pilgrim to his shrine
  And feel the patriotic pulse revive,—
  The embered zeal of manhood flame alive,—
As through embowering vistas the first peep
  Of that huge semblance of a granite hive
Delights the eye with its impressive heap
Where rests the warrior with his spouse in hal-
    lowed sleep.

XL

Protagonist of military might!
Whose statue with the flight of time expands,
Firm as the rock and lofty as the site
Whereon thy mammoth mausoleum stands;
The Union cause triumphant in thy hands
Immortalized thee, but that mute appeal,
Voiced from the tomb, e'en greater praise commands,
For those calm words "Let us Have Peace" reveal
Thy power to smite was tempered with the hope to heal.

XLI

Observe the gorge-like prospect from this tomb
The Hudson shapes till dim perspective fades
To northward where the shores of Jersey loom
With uniform abruptness which pervades
The panorama of the Palisades,
Grouping in picturesque and pristine grace
Across from sylvan Inwood's sloping glades
In uppermost Manhattan, every trace
Of rugged nature's charm which man should not deface.

XLII

How trim the water-tower peaked on a ridge
The eastern Heights of Washington disclose!
And 'neath the granite arches of High Bridge
How placidly the Harlem river flows
'Mid scenes of semi-pastoral repose!
Across the stream the Bronx, suburban tame,
Despite the inroads trade's aggression sows,
Exalts from classic heights life's lofty aim
In dome and colonnade that mark the Hall of Fame.

XLIII

Is Freedom's dawn forgotten? Look around
In quest of civic tendency or aim,
Objects and scenes on every side abound
That bear the Father of our country's name,
Communal tributes to enduring fame,
More potent than the pomp the proud affect,
True worth unfurls no tinselled oriflame;
For chivalry of character can elect
To vest the commonplace with title to respect.

XLIV

How oft the noble name of Washington
Pervades Manhattan's unromantic air!
An arch with sage monition carved thereon,
Facing an entrance to a public square,
A statue in the heart of Wall street's lair,
A mart, a fort, a bridge, a rocky height,
An ancient and a modern thoroughfare,
Are notable memorials to the might
Of him who shaped and launched our ship of state
aright.

XLV

Go, guard the gates of government and guide
The drifting herds from Europe off the shoal
Where breaks the surging socialistic tide
Which frets and froths to leap beyond control;
No fatuous foreign beacon lights the goal
Or charts the course democracy declares,
And, lest the watchful wraith of serfdom's soul
Through rifts unwardened creep in unawares,
Uproot ecclesiasticism from state affairs.

XLVI

Speed on, Manhattan, while the virile lust
And vibrant lure of youth sustain thy force!
The dregs of empires filtered through the dust
Of ages long elapsed, still meet and course
Through thy brisk veins incognizant of source:
Rejuvenate the remnants merged in one
And fused at Freedom's forge beyond divorce,
As Babel's leaven moulded Babylon,
Mint thou thy might from every race beneath
the sun.

THE CALL OF THE COUNTRY

THERE are times when a sense of satiety palls
And the glamour of city life no longer thralls,
Then the spirit of man seeks the woodlands and fields
For the comforting calm that the countryside yields.
For the woes that depress and the wrongs that aggrieve
The freedom of forest and farm can relieve,
And the ills of illusion, engendered by care,
Dissolve like the mists in the fresh mountain air.

The slave to convention whose passion for wealth
Is rewarded by premature age and ill-health
Finds something akin to revival of youth
In rustic environment, however uncouth.

A springtide aroma of fresh-furrowed turf,
A mid-summer breath of the rough-rolling surf,
A landscape which autumn in pigments portrays,—
These are worth all the joys of a dozen Broadways.

The lonesomest lives may be compassed by mirth
In the busiest streets that enliven the earth,
Where the heart of the city's cross-currents compound
With a bedlam of bustle and babel of sound.

Afloat for a lifetime are mortals that sweep
O'er the boundless expanse of the billowy deep,
While dotting earth's wild wastes with cottage or camp
Are primitive souls of the pioneer stamp.

Like the old Texas rancher who gruffly avowed
He would rather move off than be cramped by a crowd
And who felt that his range was too narrow to roam
When settlers located ten miles from his home.

KATY EAST AND KATY WEST

I

TIME has wrought so many changes
In the life I used to know
When I rode the cattle ranges
Down in Texas years ago
That there scarce remains a semblance
Of the type of folks I knew,
Only just a faint remembrance
Of a fond and faithful few,—
One of whom a grim old fellow
That no josh or joke could vex,
Whose complexion coppered mellow
Showed his origin, Tex-Mex,
Seldom spoke above a mutter,
Till by dint of duty pressed,
He would lift his tongue and utter:
"Katy East and Katy West."

II

It so happened down in Waco,
Which the Katy road runs through,
That a lone paved street would echo
With a merry motley crew
Of quaint cattlemen and tourists,
Bound for points along the line,—
Even constables and jurists
Seldom missed a treat so fine,—
When two roaring trains would smother
Every voice with deafening power
As they paused to pass each other
Round about the noon-day hour;
It was just before their coming
That our hero yelled with zest
In a tone that set hearts humming:
"Katy East and Katy West."

III

Though his nose was hooked like Caesar's,
He had not the Roman's brains,
For his youth was spent with greasers
Herding cattle on the plains,
Still he tossed a skillful lasso,
As he drifted back and forth

With cow-punchers from El Paso
And the stockyards at Fort Worth,
Till with age his speed was slacking,
Then without much fret or fuss,
He just settled down to hacking
With two ponies and a bus
As a mode of transportation,
But the part he played the best
Was to shout this information:
"Katy East and Katy West."

IV

Most of Waco's nabobs nobby
Were the gamblers that would stroll
Proud as peacocks through the lobby
Of the Hotel Metropole;
Rough and raw-boned ranchers mingled,
Always keen to take a chance,
While their bell-spurs clinked and jingled
Mimic echoes of the dance;
But the bar-room's roar and rattle
Caught the cowboy's fancy first,
Romping, milling like their cattle
In attempts to slack their thirst;
Yet a sudden lull oft sundered
All the mirth that effervesced

When the old bus-driver thundered:
"Katy East and Katy West."

V

Oft I marked his noon-day entry,
From the hotel dining-room,
Saw him stalk in like a sentry,
Bold enough to challenge doom,
With his broad sombrero flopping
From a tether held in check
And a loose bandana dropping
In a loop around his neck;
Girt and geared with all the trappings
Of a prairie pioneer,
Whip in hand with thonged enwrappings,
Straight ahead his course would steer,
Pound the floor with ponderous brogan,
Hustling every dining guest,
With his timely, trusty slogan:
"Katy East and Katy West."

VI

From amongst the fearless figures
That I loped with on the ranch,
Some were quick at cards and triggers,
Nearly all were straight and stanch,

But the firmest fixed survivor
That in retrospect remains
Is that old Waco bus-driver
And the way he called the trains;
For a moral we can summon
From his long-remembered yell
Is that things which seem uncommon
Oft are common things done well;
And this thought like music beating
On the heart-strings in my breast
Keeps my memory still repeating:
"Katy East and Katy West."

IN METARIE CEMETERY

THERE is in New Orleans a cemetery
That seems the handiwork of nymph or fairy,
Named Metarie, which old chronicles report
Was once a race-course where unbridled sport
Held carnival until, piqued by a snub
That barred his entry to the jockey club,
A local wag, for wealth and wit renowned,
Transformed the track into a burying-ground;
And with a sportsman's sense of pride and pity
Bequeathed his curious conquest to the city.

This act so pleased the public that the donor
Was fêted, toasted and acclaimed with honor
By press and pulpit as the people's friend,
Because he had the courage to defend
The principle of equal human rights,—
That law of natural instinct which unites
Men in true fellowhood,—for he had turned
Into grim jest the boast of foes that spurned
His comradeship, till death invoked surrender;
Then Metarie grouped within her bosom tender
Both friend and foe around her old defender,
Whose tomb surpasseth all in marbled splendor.

APPROACHING HONOLULU

I

SERENITY sails on a tropical trip,
Lazily lolling aboard a snug ship,
Which ploughs the Pacific's immutable breast,
Six days out of Golden Gate heading southwest,
When a shout stirs the crew, brisk officers pass,
A lookout is posted aloft with a glass,
Keen eyes peer ahead with expectant delight,
For the isles of Hawaii will soon be in sight.

II

No land has been seen since a group of gray stones
Just outside the headlands,—the bleached Farralones,—
Like a stray shoal of sea-wolves inclined to pursue,
In the dusk of an evening receded from view,
And almost a week has elapsed, still the calm
Of the ambient elements basks in their balm,
While only the depths of the ocean and sky
Envisage their vastness to soul and to eye.

III

The encircling scope and the murmuring sound
Of the sea evoke thoughts and emotions profound
In minds that can rise o'er the sordid and base
To ponder life's purport in nature's embrace;

Yet oft through such musings a magic-like hand,
Repeating its kerchiefed farewell from the land,
Creeps in, with a lingering longing once more
To set a firm foot on a welcoming shore.

IV

There's a zest in the shift from reflections sedate
To the tremor which hope's expectations create,
When all that is sober and solemn and deep
Veer to smiles as in dreams of a child fast asleep;
There's a thrill in the long watchful wait to divert
The tedium and tension of being alert,
And just as the quest seems enshrouded in doubt,
"Land ahead! off the starboard bow," shouts the
lookout.

V

Far out where the blue of the sky seems to sleep
On the crest of the mingling blue of the deep,
The sunny bright isles in the distant waves gleam
Like fragments of fancy pervading a dream:
Thus oft on the variable voyage through life
With its alternate aspects of sunshine and strife,
The goals that persistence and patience pursue
Like the isles of Hawaii at last loom in view.

WAR'S HARVEST

I

TO HASTEN the ultimate uplift of man,—
This was the heralded purpose and plan
When war of the Nations in Europe began,
But now that the conflict is ended,
Have all the lessons the grim struggle taught
Lifted a burden from millions who fought,
Brightened a hope for the ideals they sought,
Or have more been shattered than mended?

II

What if a warlord whose swaggering style
Once bluffed the world with a frown or a smile
Now tames his pulse chopping wood in exile!
What of a Czar's immolation!
Are not the countries these proud monarchs ruled
Drifting to chaos; by Bolshevists schooled,
Are not the peoples long forced, fleeced and fooled,
Now on the verge of starvation?

III

Here in a plenteous prosperous land
Prices are raised by a profiteer band,

Not by the law of supply and demand,
Plain patient folks are disgusted;
Still on a mistaken course we proceed,
Glutting the maws of insatiable greed,
Someday the victims will rise and stampede,
Then will the Trust-bunds be busted.

IV

Wherever we go they are passing the hat
With a drive for this and a drive for that,
As legions of loiterers loaf and grow fat,—
Their insolence fairly staggers;
Unless the contagion of this gnawing fault
Is checked by the law interposing a halt
Which forces these leeches to earn their own salt,
We'll soon be a nation of beggars.

V

The orgy of organized greed that incites
An age economic to curb human rights,
Which Labor contends for and Capital fights,
The world war but slightly affected;
With wealth glossing evils it never can cure,
With the rich growing richer and poorer the poor,
How long can the might of a nation endure?
How long will its laws be respected?

MOB

No mightier despot ever trod
The earth or ruled with sterner rod
Or swayed huge hosts with subtler nod
Or rode through ruin rougher shod
Than I,—part beast, part demi-god.

Horrors that make humanity tremble
Stalk in my wake when I assemble
The imps of discord and unrest
Which lurk in every outraged breast,
And seem to mock like haunting ghouls
The grief and gloom of shackled souls,
Or sportive turn the cog which grinds
Envenomed thoughts in envious minds,
Or gleeful dance with fiendish zest
On hearts by want and woe oppressed,
Or ruthless rack the nerves with dread
When eyes are filmed a murderous red
From ills that through gaunt bodies spread,
Long overworked and underfed.

Terror and Thrill, Tremor and Throb
March in my van with Shudder and Sob,
Mine is a tragic Titan's job,
I am the turbulent Tyrant Mob.

My coming serves to set in motion
A frenzied ferment of devotion
To every cause and cult and notion
Designed by knave or demagogue
To steep the public mind in fog
And mire all Christendom a-bog,
Discarding e'en the decalogue:
It is indeed unfortunate
Impostors so importunate,
Who lack the power and skill to make
The fortunes others have at stake,
Preach violence for vengeance sake,
Can fortify their tongues and nerves
By poaching on my wild preserves,
Can coyly courtesan with fame
By spurious trading on my name.

Unlike my servile offspring, Mars,
I am not throned amid the stars,
I am not ranked with brave hussars,
Nor pensioned for my wounds and scars;

Nor is my form in glory clothed,
My fate by no allegiance oathed,
I am a demon feared and loathed
By all,—an outcast behemothed:
Yet for the good of all I rise;
The foremost attributes I prize
Are patience born of sacrifice
And justice shrieking to the skies
For what oppression oft denies
In human rights and sympathies;
For these my reign, though sharp and brief,
Extends a rainbow of relief
Across a horror-riven reef
Where breaks an avalanche of grief,
A cataclysm of emotion
Which sweeps mankind like storm-tossed ocean.

Ye, who are wont to wreck and rob,
Snugged in the role of sleek nabob,
Who snare and swindle honest folk,
Who jeer at justice as a joke,
Who gloat to see your victims broke
Beneath the dull industrial yoke,
While orphans wail and widows sob,
Beware the righteous wrath of Mob.

TRUE EXPRESSION

KNOW YE that true expression lies
Less in the tongue than in the eyes,
For eloquent as may appear
The fluent lip, a smile or tear
Can quicken joy, can banish fear
Or make the pulse with pleasure start
Or soothe with sympathy the heart,
Eclipsing Oratory's art;
For Gladness melts what Grief absorbs
Beneath the glance of smiling orbs.

These mute interpreters of Love
Reflect what lips can seldom breathe,
As stars that faintly beam above
Are glistened in the wave beneath.

BY THE GRAVE OF POE

BESIDE Westminster's stately towers,*
Where reverent footsteps softly tread,
A churchyard lies, uncheered by flowers,
But honored by th' immortal dead.

I visited that hallowed spot
In autumn many years ago,
The scene will never be forgot,
Whose gloom was like impending woe.

'Twas midnight and in varying tones
The belfries tolled the dismal hour,
I glanced upon sepulchral stones
And seemed to feel enchantment's power.

A splendid marble shaft arose
Above a corner of the lot
Thro shrubbery which lent repose
To elegance that deckt the spot.

*Poe is buried in Westminster churchyard in the heart of the city of Baltimore, Md.

I knelt before the sepulchre
Which hides th' immortal poet's dust
And like a pilgrim-worshiper
Paid tribute to his classic bust.

No echoing sounds the stillness broke
Save from above the sculptured door
Methought I heard the Raven croak
His solitary "Nevermore."

The gathering gloom gripped like a trance,
And when I passed the iron gate
I paused but dared not backward glance
As if pursued by fear or fate.

THE DREAM-SIREN

IN DREAMS of yesternight I stood
Upon the ocean's darkling shore
While all around was solitude
Save for the waves' inconstant roar.

Before me rose a maiden sad
With sapphire eyes, half-sheathed in sleep,
A white transparent texture clad
This Amphitrite of the deep.

She spake in stately solemn tone:
"Mine is the power that conquers want;
Speak quickly ere the night is flown,
Whate'er you wish for I shall grant."

One moment mute enrapt I gazed
Upon her half-averted face,
As wild caressing billows praised
Her statuesque and nymphal grace.

Her long loose-flowing tresses flung
  Their golden festoons to the storm,
When harkening to my suppliant tongue
  That gently roused her slumbrous form.

"I would my heart were like the wave
  That bounds exulting o'er the sea,
And when the scowling tempests rave
  I still could frolic gay and free.

"I would my mind were like the lake
  That mirrors peace at eventide,
Unruffled by the winds that shake
  The rustling woodland by its side.

"I would my soul were like the vault
  Of boundless heaven's ethereal blue,
Untarnished by a clouded fault
  And to its Source unswerving true.

"I would my love were like the rose
  That blooms in unfrequented fields,
Where only the wooing zephyr knows
  The favorite fragrance that it yields.

"I would the wealth of all the earth
Were cast returnless to the wind,
And the nobler standard of true worth
Were culture of the heart and mind.

"Yea! dearer to me than tempting wealth
Than grandeur's pomp or pleasure's lure
Is long-robust, unfailing health,
A faithful heart, a conscience pure."

I paused. The mermaid's lifted arms,
Commanding while they captivate,
Though still revealing myriad charms,
Were now impotent,—'twas too late.

Her shadowy form began to fade,
Her lips seemed motioning to reply;
Methought I heard the sounds they made,
But 'twas the ocean's surging sigh.

A startled wakening from my sleep
Dissolved the phantom, slumber-born,
While through my window came the peep
Of twilight ushering in the morn.

THE MUSE IN MISFORTUNE

How strange! the humblest peasant thrives,
While languish gifted men of song,
And seldom calm, Arcadian lives
Are lotted to the minstrel throng.

Betimes, perchance, oppressed by want,
Their harps have sounded half-unstrung;
Rebuke not! think how they might chant
If fortune favored what was sung.

Their lots should not, howe'er they live,
Provoke a prudish look or laugh;
Their hearts when song-enburdened give
What other hearts will phonograph.

Unqualified for deeds that bring
Success within commercial marts,
But deeply versed in arts that spring
From gifts of mind and depths of heart.

Their words recording saints rehearse,
Their praise a cherub-choir intones,
Their fame survives adorning verse
Incised upon memorial stones.

THE REGULAR SOLDIER

(These verses were written at Manila, P. I., in August, 1898, a few days after the city was captured from the Spanish by the American forces, at which time the writer was a member of the Fourteenth U. S. Infantry.)

I

A NATION'S heart beats high and fast,
As legions leap to arms,
Responsive to the bugle blast
That thrills with war's alarms;
From Huron's shores to Rio's banks
Advance the volunteers,
But foremost in the forming ranks
Mute regular appears:
One moment's lull, one quick command,
He dashes from his native land,
On fields of conflict, near or far,
Behold the ready regular.

II

Thro swamp or brushwood, stones or stub,
He marches day or night,
Half-rations of the roughest grub
To tease his appetite:
'Most any time he may be killed
In some outposting fray,
He ne'er complains,—he's duty-drilled,
And knows how to obey:

Of exploits on the field or post
He never cares to prate or boast,
His tales are told by many a scar,
This stern and silent regular.

III

A blanket's folded in his pack,
A change of clothes between,
A biscuit's in his haversack,
A swig's in his canteen,
His campaign hat is tattered,
His leggings loose and frayed
His uniform, mud-spattered
From the trenches where he stayed
All night before Manila's walls
'Mid showers of shells and Mauser balls:
A lesson in the brunt of war
Learn from the rugged regular.

IV

Fitted for any realm to range,
His hardened spirit mettle
No circumstance of clime can change,
No rigors can unsettle:
With manners blunt and features burnt
By usage rude and hard,

The manly pliant traits he's learnt
Are discipline's reward:
His aim the mark has seldom missed,
He's just as handy with his fist,
For he can wrestle, fence or spar,
This agile earnest regular.

V

How senseless to contemn and lance
With taunts he can't resent,
Because in days of peace, perchance,
His hours are idly spent;
Remember, arms ennoble men
To cast the warrior's stamp,
Whose guardian is obedience, when
In garrison or camp:
Blame not his awkward pen or speech,
He's skilled in what the tactics teach,
No blunders his maneuvers mar,
This manual-modeled regular.

VI

Behold him, private in the ranks,
On days of dress-parade,
Whether in center or on flanks
Each order is obeyed

In faultless unison as when
The coursing spheres began;
How grand to see a thousand men
Move like a single man!
There's steady cadence in his pace
And serious silence in his face,
His polished arms glint like a star,
This trained and trusty regular.

THE LOWEST RANK

THE LOWEST rank known in the regular army,
Which troopers award to an ease-seeking flunky,
In lingo whose marksmanship always could charm me,
Is "Dog robber to a lance-corporal's bunkie."

A recruit in the ranks of the faithful though humble,
The bunkie's much more than a snoring side-sleeper;
He's a pal who can relish camp gossip and grumble,
Yet muster himself without counsel or keeper.

A grade below sergeant and just above private
The corporal struts with an air self-concerned,

While the "lance" is in prospect and will not arrive at
His full-chevroned bloom till a warrant is earned.

The dodging dog-robber, so adept to pander,
Who thus escapes discipline's rigid pursuits,
Is menial-in-chief to the company commander,
For whom he runs errands and shines up his boots.

In battle's baptism, where even the nervous
Are spurred by revenge to be steadfast and spunky,
Away in the rear still nursing soft service,
Loafs "Dog robber to a lance-corporal's bunkie."

FLEETING THOUGHT

I GRASPED my pen to write a thought
But, like a flash, it fled;
A search through memory but brought
Distraction on my head:
'Tis thus with hopes so ardent sought,
At length before us spread,
We grasp—and lo! behold, we've caught
Adversity instead.

VERNAL MORN AND EVE

BEHOLD! with sudden burst the blush
Of morn upon the Orient skies,
While soon from out th' adjoining bush
Arise euphonious melodies;
A whisper bids the spirit "Hush"
And harken to the feathered choir,
For rival linnet and the thrush
In mingled harmony conspire,
Wild-warbling as they flit among
The fragrant hawthorn bowers,
And neighboring daisies, lately sprung,
Are bathed in dewy showers:
How sweet the early morning hours
When Phoebus lifts his dazzling eye
And all the cheer of birds and flowers
Awaken more than ecstasy!

But when the ever-varying dyes
Of orange, saffron, purple, red
Tinsel the clouds of evening's skies,
As Phoebus goes to bed;
'Tis then arising pale and clear
Above the depths of azured East,
Fair Cynthia with her stars appear
Like Hebe at the feast.

VALENTINE'S DAY

TO-DAY is Cupid's busy day,
His missive-bearing darts
Speed pretty tokens far away
To gladden loving hearts.

And, sweetheart, though this gift of mine
May greet thee with surprise,
Methinks no dainty Valentine
So welcome to thine eyes.

The image of myself I send
In fond exchange for thine,
Long be this tribute of a friend
A treasured Valentine.

Perhaps it will in after years
Some happy hours beguile,
And should deep sorrow threaten tears
Perhaps 'twill win a smile.

Though hope may fade and love depart
By cruel fate's design,
Still keep my image in thy heart,
For there I'll cherish thine.

LINES TO A YOUNG LADY

(In answer to the complaint of a rival suitor who found fault with her favorite lover because he had unconsciously worn a hole in the seat of his trousers.)

YOUR pretty face may wear a smile
When next your sly inspecting glance
Averts its love-looks for a while
To search the seat of my old pants.

For my landlady, gentle soul,
With modest eyes and blushing face,
Has patched the unadorning hole
That peeped from such an awkward place.

I care not for the prim attire
Of which the gilded coxcomb brags,
Most men of greatness we admire
Were sometimes robed in pauper rags.

Then think not I am less a man
Because my clothes should wear or soil;
That fray which some were loth to scan
Was wrought by arduous honest toil.

A tattered cover oft encloses
The priceless contents of a volume,
While verdant ivies and sweet roses
Conceal the crumbling antique column.

IN LIFE'S AUTUMN

THE RICH rosy fruit ripening luscious and mellow,
Which stirred by the breezes half-hiddenly swing
Through the foliage brown crimson-tinted and yellow,
Were once the sweet blossoms that bloomed in the Spring.

'Tis the Autumn of life which reveals in our faces
Whether sorrow or joy has implanted the most,
Then sadly we peer in the mirror for traces
Of beauties which youth could so blushingly boast.

LONELINESS

DOWN Edgecombe road this early morn
As leisurely I chanced to walk,
I spy a rose without a thorn,
Full-blown upon a leafless stalk;
All solitary it grows—,
No infant buds its splendors share,
No envious friends or rival foes,
Alone it scents the morning air.

Its every petal drips of dew,
  Like tear-drops set in Beauty's eyes,
Harmonious to its richer hues
  Of deep and dark vermillion dyes,
Like some fair love-lorn maid who seeks
  A heart responsive to her own,
With suffused eyes and tear-stained cheeks,
  She pines in solitude alone.

THE LIBERTINE'S LAMENT

THE sunshine of my life is o'er,
  Each hour descends a darker shade,
My heart once buoyant to the core,
  Now feels its failing vigor fade.

My ebbing pulse is slow and tame,
  While care has wrinkled o'er my brow,
And what was former fire and flame
  Is smoke and smouldering ashes now.

What fiery passions unsubdued,
  What page of folly's fruitless lore,
What path of pleasure unpursued
  Is left for me to linger o'er!

TWO PRAYERS

I

IMBUED with that emotion felt
Which links devotion to desires
When humans turn to Heaven for aid,
A soldier and a slacker knelt
Before the altar of their sires,
And this is how the slacker prayed:

II

"Spare me to help preserve and rear
A cultured type of humankind
To better serve and praise Thee, Lord!
Assign me, therefore, to some sphere
Of civic welfare far behind
The carnage wrought by shell and sword!"

III

With soul to selfish hopes averse,
Where honor's aim stood uppermost,
The warrior made no meek appeal,
But drilled to speak in language terse,
And flavored like his favorite toast,
This triple pledge renewed with zeal:

IV

"Three solemn vows are here rehearsed
Which flinching under no pretext
I'll keep where'er I roam;
My homage to my God is first,
My service to my country next,
And last my duty to my home."

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